

# The Ballarat Naturalist

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## Gems of the far South Coast

Jenny and Peter Sedgwick

The far south coast of NSW (concentrating on Bermagui and the Green Cape area) has drawn the Sedgwick family since their first encounter with it in the late 1970s. It is backed by mountain ranges and encompasses rivers, running into lakes and estuaries emptying into the sea. It hosts long sandy beaches, mysterious rocky bays, enticing headlands and sheltered coves.

The talk was delivered in two parts. The first section introduced the underlying turbidite and volcanic geology of Camel Rock and Gulaga (Mt.Dromedary) touching on European and indigenous readings of the land.

Jen's photos covered many animal groups including rock pool dwellers, shorebirds, insects, bush birds and birds of prey related to the coastal fringes plus some dramatic close personal encounters with them.



A lesson to all chip thieves was played out by this Pelican – but the thief escaped unharmed.



This photo illustrates the story of ‘biting off more than you can chew’ involving the rescue of a great Cormorant with a fish jammed in its throat and a vet visit.



Another shows juvenile White-bellied Sea-eagles honing their skills, tangling in the air, in this successful breeding zone.

Endangered Hooded Plovers, Pied Oystercatchers and other shore-birds and their threats were discussed.



Donning our snorkels and masks, Pete took us into the intriguing underwater world. He showed varied habitats and the creatures that call these zones home including sponges, urchins, crustaceans and gastropods. He also highlighted some special encounters with turtles,

octopus, cuttlefish, eels, seals and various fish.

Photos included a cheeky baby Australian Fur Seal (left) ,

the baked bean like Wandering Sea Anemone, *Phlyctenactis tuberculosa* (below),



and an inquisitive Moray Eel whose aggressive looks are partly due to the fact that it pumps water through its mouth to the gills positioned at the back. They also have an extra set of jaws in the throat, making them very successful predators.



### **Lake Corangamite Excursion, 10 September 2023**

Five cars met on the Hamilton Highway where the Woody Yaloak River flows under two bridges near Cressy. The group included Field Naturalists from Ballarat, Susan Kruss and David Cook from Geelong FNC and our excursion leader, Leon Bren, who was guest speaker at a recent FNCB meeting.

We met on the older iron and steel bridge with basalt piers constructed in 1854. The Highway now travels over a concrete bridge built in 1995.

The Woody Yaloak Creek begins near Enfield. River Red Gums grow along the creek as far south as the Hamilton Highway. Water Ribbons and Common Reed were growing along the creek.



We left the highway and travelled south through yellow canola crops as high as the fences, to stop at the northern edge of Cundare Pool. This is a man-made lake constructed by building a wall to the south, to store fresh water flowing in from the Woody Yalloak Creek and to relieve the flooding of farms by Lake Corangamite during the very wet years of the 1950's. There are no natural outlets from Lake Corangamite.

The pool is now saline and is a good bird habitat. Birds seen while we were there include Coot, Black Swan, several ducks, Great Cormorant, Red-capped Plover, White-faced Heron and White-necked Heron, White-fronted Chats, a Grey Fantail in the boxthorn. On the salt flats around the margin of the Pool were several salt



tolerant plants including Beaded Glasswort, Sea-blite and Saltbush. Also present were Buck's-horn Plantain, Wilsonia, and Burr Medic.



Cundare salt bush    Austral  
Seablite (*Suaeda australis*)



Italian white Snails by Cundare lake side

Water can flow from Cundare pool into Lake Corangamite which becomes more saline as water evaporates. We stopped at a diversion gate which controls the water flow. Birds in the channels included Grey Teal, Little Pied Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Hoary-headed Grebe and Eastern Great Egret. A Pelican flew overhead and there were a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles and Black-shouldered Kite in the area.

Lake Corangamite has few places with public access. We stopped on a dune along Corangamite Lake Road for a view over the Lake.





From here we could see towers of the Rokewood wind farm and Mt Elephant. Lake Corangamite is the largest permanent salt-water lake in Australia, with an area of 23,000 hectares.

The dune was formed by sand and shell fragments blown from the lake when dry. Mega Fauna found in the dunes have been dated at 40,000 years old. Shell grit was collected from lake edges to make cement. Basalt from volcanoes flowed into the lake and blocked out-flow. The Lake was formed about 1 million years ago.

Western District Lakes include nine lakes listed under the Ramsar convention. Lake Corangamite is one of these lakes. The lakes support over 70 different species of wetland birds, and 20 species of migratory shorebird that are listed under international migratory bird agreements.

After lunch at the Red Rock picnic area, we went to a lookout to view Lake Corangamite and the dormant volcanic peaks Mt Porndon, Mt Leura and Mt Elephant.



The multiple craters ( maars) of Red Rock





The final stop for the day was at Cundare Barrage on the Cressy – Colac Road. The water from Woody Yaloak Creek can be diverted by gates to Cundare Pool and Lake Corangamite or into a channel which flows to Lake Murdeduke and Barwon River. There was opposition to the channel because it could carry salt into the Barwon.

Along the Woody Yaloak Creek was a group of 18 Eastern Great Egret. Many Hoary-headed Grebe and Black Duck were present.

We thanked Leon Bren for leading the excursion and explaining the geology, hydrology and history of this interesting area.

John Gregurke

Images Carol H and Val H





## **Postcards**

### **Dalman's Tasmania holiday – June 2023**

Peter and I chose to spend the month of June in Tasmania. Our weather was mild, usually dry and pleasant. We avoided the west coast and central highlands, staying primarily along the east and northern coasts. Highlights included The Gardens which are along the Bay of Fires near St Helens. Lady Jane Franklin named this area because on her visit the area was a profusion of wildflowers. These were not obvious in June but the orange coloured lichens covering



boulders in the sea make spectacular viewing. While parked near a small beach for lunch we observed a kelp gull obtaining food. It gathered a shellfish from shallow water, flew high above a large, flat area of rock and dropped the shell before descending and eating the contents. Sometimes the shell failed to shatter so was retrieved for another drop. Once it departed, Peter climbed/scrambled to the target area to discover many such broken shells – evidently a frequent occurrence.

Another interesting half day was spent at the Tasmanian Bushland Gardens. Some of us visited this on an ANN trip in 2014. We were pleased to see that the area is looking really good. The walking trails amongst the garden beds have been maintained, still with names on most plants and grouped according to the areas in which they grow naturally. The sculptures are still impressive, the waterfall to a pond switches on once movement is detected, covered barbecues and tables have been added and brochures can be borrowed to read as you walk. For those unfamiliar with these gardens, the 20 hectare



area was a disused, worked out quarry, purchased by a group of dedicated, enthusiastic people in 2000. Some of these committed people still maintain the area and are to be commended. The garden is open in daylight hours, well signposted just south of Buckland on a main travel route heading south towards Hobart.

We spent a week at Primrose Sands, not far from Dunalley, a town, indeed area, ravaged by bushfires in January 2013. We were surprised to learn how dry the area is. Trucks delivering domestic water were observed frequently and our accommodation instructions supplied the number to ring if our supply ran low. Clear evidence of the destructive fires extends around the district.

One day we travelled to Eaglehawk Neck for a boat trip with Wild Ocean Tasmania. This was excellent, provided we were happy to travel in a small, uncovered, fast military boat, guided by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable man who clearly had no qualms about big waves. We travelled south along coastal features until we reached the most southerly part we could – Cape Pillar. Larger tour boats cannot do this. An albatross was seen, so the boat headed further out to sea. Then began an amazing experience. About a dozen albatross were around us, diving to feed amongst a sizeable group of seals. The birds flew above us, around us and kept on feeding, basically ignoring us. Our guide suggested there would be a bait ball to attract the birds and seals, a ball of small fish huddling together for safety. They were Wandering and Shy albatross. The water where the seals were leaping was noticeably calmer and flatter than the surrounding sea. Our three hour trip was longer than usual as whales had been reported but we didn't see them. We were well dressed but given extra coats to wear over our own. Geological features early in the trip, caves entered, impressive dolerite columns, historical facts and general information were all excellent, but being surrounded by albatross topped those. Our experienced guide had not witnessed this phenomenon before and was also awed by the opportunity.

Another day we travelled to Port Arthur and looked again at things like the tessellated pavement but then we went on a route we knew little about. From Port Arthur the drive goes from Nubeena to Premaydena, along the Saltwater River Road to Lime Bay State Reserve. Near there, on a bay, at Coal Mines Historic Site, we were amazed to see the ruins from an extensive penal colony, where there was once a settlement of hundreds of convicts and the required infrastructure. A walking track with signs and panels goes past cottages, hospital, school, intact solitary confinement cells you can enter and it is all totally free and we only met two other people. The prisoners extracted coal from mines but the coal was inferior and the mines



closed in 1848. The site is one of 11 that make up the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property. There are also bush walking tracks. We definitely recommend a visit.

We travelled on back roads where appropriate. On such a road, between Devonport and Deloraine there is Kimberly warm springs. Even in winter, steam was rising from a small lake and fingers dipped into water proved it was slightly warm. Vegetation was different around a few bubbling patches. There are picnic facilities and a toilet.

We spent five nights close to Cygnet on a farm now being revegetated to the surprise of surrounding farmers. The owners have a night vision camera and shared images with us of Tasmanian devils visiting during two of our nights. Their chooks are well locked up at night. From Cygnet we enjoyed a tour of the wooden boat workshop and museum at Franklin, learning about different useful timbers, particularly Huon pine.

We stayed five nights in Penguin and found a brochure entitled “Created from Chaos”. This was excellent and guided us along a 60km scenic shore line from Devonport to Table Cape. Along this geology trail 13 sites are identified, with explanatory panels and access tracks, mostly across the coastal train line. The brochure explains that some of Tasmania’s oldest deformed rocks (750 million years old) have been sculptured by recent ice age effects and volcanic action. It is easy to find sedimentary structures containing pebbles and rocks dropped by icebergs. These were transported from long distances to the coast. There are numerous geological features so at least a day is needed to see them.



At Ross it is worth visiting the old quarry to walk amongst where the sandstone blocks were cut to make the famous Ross bridge. The visible cuts are evidence of very difficult extractions done long ago, some by convicts, some by stonemasons. Panels explain the rock sheets, common in the area, sometimes in home yards and farms.



Out of Deloraine we visited Trowunna Wildlife Park, formerly Mole Creek wildlife park. This day was clear evidence that tourists avoid winter. One other couple and us were taken on an included tour to see Tasmanian Devils feeding, and observing spotted tail quolls busy creating the next generation. According to the guide, mating commences at the winter solstice and they were on time. They were housed behind glass so their antics were easily observed. The part I knew nothing about is how long mating takes. He said several days (non stop) is usual and longer has been recorded. They paused occasionally, panting and lying down but never did the male relinquish his grip on fur on the back of her neck. They looked exhausted. It seems odd behaviour for a presumably newly pregnant mother. We had the opportunity to pat a wombat and devil, and wander along aviaries and encounter kangaroos.



We did do some “tourist” things and a definite highlight is at the Deloraine Information Centre/museum. We have been on other occasions and recommend it. There is a very large embroidery art work. This is housed in a darkened theatre, but opened, lit and described every thirty minutes with spotlights focussed on features. There are four seasonal panels with Vivaldi’s Four Seasons accompaniment. Some features are buildings and town events such as the agricultural show; some are natural areas, landscapes, birds and animals. It is stitched primarily in silk but includes some wool, leather and fabric. It was made by more than 300 townspeople close to thirty years ago, taking over 10,000 hours to complete.

Claire and Peter Dalman



## **In Memoriam – William (Bill) Elder**

Club members were very sad to learn about the death of Bill Elder on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023. Bill was a member of the FNCB for 9 ½ years, quickly becoming one of its most active and involved members.

Keen participation in field trips, Member's Images nights, conversations over supper after meetings, soon grew to leading excursions and full-length presentations, often featuring his own detailed illustrations and comic cartoons.

These cartoons were also introduced into the newsletter, for which he was editor from 2018 until ill-health forced him to hand on the role in early 2023. Under his creative hand, the newsletter was always a great read, skilfully laid out and regularly introducing new columns like book reviews, "Postcards from..." and "Weed of the Month".

As a General Committee Member from 2016-2020, Bill took on a wide range of tasks, making submissions on various plans, strategies and projects with potential to impact local environmental values, advocating for biodiversity values at public meetings and leading the development of Club policies on "Ethical use of technology on field trips" and "Risk Management". He also organised guest speakers and field trips including Christmas break-ups at his beautiful bush block.

In 2019, Bill launched a junior sub-group of the Club titled the 'Rat Nats'. This was an initiative to which people had been aspiring for years, but it took Bill to make it happen. He developed materials for the participants, hosted most of the get-togethers at his Scarsdale property, and set up a special Facebook page for them to stay in touch with each other during Covid-19 lockdowns.

As Club President in 2020 and 2021, Bill shepherded our Club safely through the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic, initiating the invaluable FNCB iNaturalist Project pages to enable members to continue to share their discoveries with one another when it wasn't possible to meet together. He also established Zoom meetings for both the Committee and the Club, a successful initiative that has endured post-Covid.

Bill's immense contributions to our Club were honoured at this year's AGM when he was presented with the Club "Award of Merit" Medal. His creative and organisational legacy will endure at our Club, and his warm company and broad knowledge will long be missed. On behalf of members, I offer our deepest condolences to his wife Kathy and their family and friends. By Emily Noble



## **A summary of the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Meeting Minutes held 7.30pm, September 1, 2023**

Attendance: President Margaret Rich welcomed twenty-four members in person and nine members via Zoom.

Apologies: J. Petheram, A. Arnold, S. Faull and M. Moravec.

Guest Speakers: "Gems of the NSW South Coast – Above and Below the Waterline" was presented by Club members Jenny and Peter Sedgwick and beautifully illustrated by their stunning photos.

### . Business Arising from Previous Club Meeting on August 4, 2023

- The invitation to have a promotional table at the Friends of Ballarat Botanical Gardens Biodiversity Group event on October 14 was accepted and work has begun on a one-page promotional flyer.
- Emily is still preparing the letter documenting the terms of re-housing the club library at Clarkesdale.
- An outcome of John P's efforts to track down relevant contacts and information regarding scheduled logging in local parks was to let members know how to register to be kept informed and consulted on any activity/ changes in plans by VicForests in local public land areas. With the help of Sheree, Andy and other committee members, John extended these efforts to cover other issues affecting conservation on public land, producing the guidelines titled "Reporting and Enquiring about Nature Conservation Issues on Local Public Land". These were sent out to all members who receive the newsletter by email.
- Whilst John Petheram volunteered to write-up this month's field trip to the Lake Corangamite area at the August Club Meeting, his recent bereavement means we are now looking for another volunteer to write-up the September field trip. ( JG)

### Business Arising from Correspondence:

- FNCB Committee members agreed to accept invitations by Friends of Canadian Corridor and Ballarat City Council to have a "promotional presence" at their upcoming events: the FoCC Koala Forum on Thurs. 14th Sep. from 5.30-8.00pm and the Ballarat Seniors Expo on Wednesday 4th October from 10-2pm. At least one committee member has already volunteered to be at each event to promote the FNCB. If anyone else would like to come along and support those efforts, please email Emily.
- The FNCB's Annual Information Statement has been submitted to the ACNC.
- The FNCB's collective environmental volunteering contribution

has been collated and supplied to DEECA for their Volunteering Naturally 2023 report. It added up to 4000 hrs!

- The Ballarat Mechanics Institute has indicated its willingness to host a group of FNCB members at the BMI one afternoon or early evening to see their historic collection of Baron Ferdinand von Mueller's plant specimens. Are members interested? Yes. Emily will contact Paula Nicholson at BMI to find out a date/ time that suit them and share details with members.

- Wendy Bolger was accepted as a FNCB member at our August Committee Meeting. Please give her a warm welcome and introduce yourselves when you get a chance.

- Emily provided a brief update on our efforts to get our Club's biodiversity-related documents, including its newsletters, incorporated into Museum Victoria's Biodiversity Heritage Library. Hard copies of decades of Club newsletters and other documents were recently returned to Margaret by Susan Kruss who has been using them to complete her PhD Thesis on the history of the FNCB providing a voice for nature. We contacted the BHL to update them on the progress we have made on collating relevant documents and to find out if they were successful in getting a grant to digitise, redact any personal details, catalogue and upload FNCB's relevant documents to their online library. They hadn't yet heard from the funding body. We were assured, however, that we would be at the top of their list since we had put in a considerable amount of effort to locate and supply our documents, and we received more information about the next steps to get our documents to them. We will try to track down the nine missing newsletters and supply our relevant Club records to them ASAP.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Opening bal. (as at Aug. 4):      \$9,260.86

Income      \$35.00

Expenses: \$32.00

Closing bal.: \$9,263.86

Motion: that the Treasurer's Report be accepted and tabled invoices be approved for payment.— approved

### **. General Business**

- Sunday 10th September field trip, 8.30am-4.30pm: Lake Corangamite region, to be led by Leon Bren with support from club members Andy Arnold and Margaret Rich (and a big thanks to John P for all of his work in planning this field trip and overcoming logistical challenges). There will be five stops during the excursion.



They will feature waterbirds, fascinating hydrology and history, salt-tolerant plants and scenic landscapes.

The Discovering Ballarat's Bushland revision sub-committee will meet again at Carol's next Tuesday afternoon.

- A memorial service for Nicky Petheram will be held at Tobin's next Wednesday at 10am
- . Our thoughts are with John and his family at this very sad time.

### **Show & Tell/ Field Reports**

- Carol brought along a copy of Alison Pouliot's latest book, "Underground Lovers", and highly recommended it to members as an enthralling read about the many ecological functions fulfilled by fungi in a myriad of ecosystems.
- Carol also reported that she was delighted to come across a koala at head height at her first ever visit to Union Jack Reserve, Buninyong. It was her first koala sighting in decades.
- Neville mentioned that he had just had the privilege of travelling through Central Australia and taking a flight over Lake Eyre (Kati Thanda). Upon his return, he undertook a survey of the fauna under a grid of 200 roof tiles across the conservation area at his Chepstowe property and under almost every tile, found a minimum of 10 Spotted Marsh-frogs (*Limnodynastes tasmaniensis*), sometimes side-by-side with Little Whip Snakes (*Suta flagellum*).

**Next Meeting:** "Inspiring stories from the FNCB's illustrious past." This talk will be presented by honorary club member and Federation University PhD Candidate Susan Kruss. Susan has unearthed some fascinating stories whilst completing her History PhD on the history of the FNCB as a voice for nature.

**When? Friday 6th October 2023, 7.30pm** in person at the Federation University building at the corner of Gillies St & Gregory St, Wendouree or via Zoom if you prefer.

**Saturday 7th October field trip:** Meet at the Federation Uni building, corner Gillies St and Gregory St, Wendouree at **4.30pm** for a presentation about frogs from local expert Ray Draper. At 5.30pm, we'll head to Mullawallah Wetland, Lucas Lane, Cardigan to listen to, identify and record frogs. Estimated finish time: 7pm at the latest. Wear appropriate clothing and clean, sturdy shoes. You could bring binoculars, camera, torch and field guides, plus refreshments.

## **Excursions and Meetings**

**Fri 6th Oct** Susan Kruss *Inspiring stories from the FNCB's illustrious past.*

**Sat 7th Oct** evening Ray & Cherie Draper *Frogs at Mullawallah Wetland* from 4.30 pm—see notice inside

### ***Future events***

**Fri 3rd Nov** **Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture: Leon Costermans**  
*60 kilometres around Ballarat: the geology and diverse landscapes*

..  
**Sun 5th Nov** Roger Thomas and Emily Noble *Wildflowers & birds of Mt Beckwith*

**Next Committee meeting** **Tuesday 24th Oct at 7.30 pm** via zoom

SEANA Camp (October 20-23).based in Yarram and hosted jointly by the Latrobe Valley and Sale FNC's

**Club meetings are normally held on 1st Friday of the month at 7.30 pm at the Federation Uni Gillies St Campus (corner of Gillies and Gregory Sts, Lake Wendouree),**

### **Committee**

President	Margaret Rich
Secretary	Emily Noble
Treasurer	Kathy Elder
Committee	Andy Arnold
	Val Hocking
	Graeme Lunt
	John Petheram
	Elva Bird
	Sheree Cartledge

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**Meetings** - in person and may continue to be held via Zoom.  
Members will be kept informed of arrangements each month.

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